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MRS. LESLIE CARTER

IN

David Belasco's

DU BARRY

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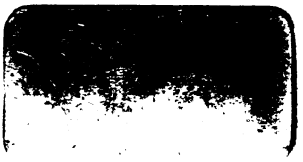

MRS. LESLIE CARTER

IN

DAVID BELASCO'S

DU BARRY

ACT I.

JEANETTE VAUBERNIER.

Mrs. Leslie Carter

IN

David Belasco's

Du Barry

With portraits of Mrs. Carter
by
JOHN CECIL CLAY
Together with portrait of
DAVID BELASCO
and numerous engravings of photographs and sketches in black and white

NEW YORK
Frederick A. Stokes Company
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1902

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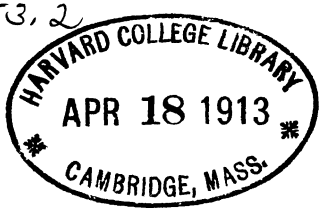

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Jeanette Vaubernier . . *Frontispiece*

PAGE.

Reproduction of the Original Sign of the Milliner's Shop 10
David Belasco 11
Milliner's Doll 13
Objects seen in the Milliner's Shop . . 15
Corset of the Period 19
Hurdy-gurdy Player 21
Sedan Chair 23
Orange-woman 26
Screen and Dressing-Table actually owned and used by Du Barry . . . 29
Copy of Affiche actually used in the shop of Labille 32
Comtesse Du Barry 33
A Corner of Du Barry's Bedchamber in the Palace at Versailles . . . 37
Spinnet of the Period 39
Veritable Night Table actually used by Du Barry at Versailles . . . 41
The Du Barry Coffee Cup . . . 45
Comtesse Du Barry 47
Veritable Louis XV Table . . . 49
A Corner of the Property Room . . 51
Body Guard of the King . . . 53
The Punch Bowl 55
Zamore 57
Du Barry Slippers 59

MRS. LESLIE CARTER
IN
DAVID BELASCO'S
DU BARRY

"Can she hope to equal Zaza?" was the question that came naturally enough to the lips of thousands of play-goers in all parts of the country, when it was announced that Mrs. Leslie Carter was to appear in a play founded on the life of the famous Mme. Du Barry, one of the most notable figures in the brilliant and profligate court of Louis XV.

"Will it be possible to make a really interesting play out of the material offered by her life?" was another question of almost equal interest, and one whose solution was a matter of serious doubt.

A great many attempts have been made to place the favorites of royalty on the stage in interesting, dramatic form, and very few of these attempts have been

really successful. Not only has it been found difficult to make the life story of such a woman genuinely dramatic, without straying too far away from history,

REPRODUCTION OF THE ORIGINAL SIGN OF THE MILLINER'S SHOP.

but it has seemed wellnigh impossible to present stage pictures of life in royal palaces that could compare in any way

Faithfully
David Belasco.

with the popular idea as to what life of that sort really was. Shakespeare, who well knew how to make kings and princes tractable stage puppets, has said something about the "divinity that doth hedge a king," and even in this republican country, a dramatist must treat the sovereign of his creation with due respect and ceremony and give him gorgeous surroundings, if he does not want him to be laughed at. Small wonder, then, that play-goers shook their heads doubtfully when they heard that Mrs. Carter proposed to appear in a *rôle* designed to give her even greater scope than "Zaza," and in a play which should give the public a vivid picture of the most gorgeous, extravagant and dissolute court that Europe has ever known.

MILLINER'S DOLL

But long before these questions were asked by play-goers David Belasco had

found fitting answers for them. No sooner was the success of "Zaza" assured, than he set himself to the task of preparing for the star, whose artistic greatness was now acknowledged by every one, a play which should present her to the public in a greater, more interesting, more important part than any that she had been seen in before. Both he and Mrs. Carter had long since decided on Mme. Du Barry as the best historic *rôle* available and now that the work incidental to the presentation of "Zaza" was over, they began in earnest on their preparations for the next play. They ransacked French and English literature for matter relating to the famous Frenchwoman and her royal lover. They studied with the utmost care the social and political conditions which existed in France during the period which preceded and paved the way for the French Revolution; and they made a close study of the furniture, dresses, ornaments, fans, and wigs which were used in court at that time.

In the summer of 1900, at the close of

OBJECTS SEEN IN THE MILLINER'S SHOP.

their sensationally successful London season of "Zaza," they went to Paris and Versailles, where they visited the scene of every known episode in Jeanette Du Barry's career. They spent days in Paris and Versailles and took photographs of the rooms in which the mistress of the French king actually lived and gave audience to the proudest nobles and the greatest statesmen, soldiers, and poets in the kingdom. Here and there in the shops of Paris, they picked up bits of old furniture, embroideries and ornaments of the period which they were studying. They even went so far as to secure various articles which had actually belonged to Mme. Du Barry. From different sources they procured detailed descriptions of everything pertaining to her private life and that of the King, so that the various things that were made to order were, generally speaking, exact copies of those which had been in actual use.

The difficulty in presenting a series of stage pictures of the extravagant luxury which characterized the court—and which,

with its suggestion of the squalid misery, hunger, and discontent that culminates in the Reign of Terror, is the keynote of the drama—may be imagined when we remember that Mme. Du Barry's expenditures amounted to millions of dollars a year.

It was in the year 1768 that she first acquired her hold on the King. Those who believe in omens, may find food for thought in the fact that within a few weeks of the day on which she was formally presented at court, there came into this world in the little town of Ajaccio in Corsica, a man who was destined to occupy by force of arms and genius the very throne on whose steps she may be said to have had her place. For five years Du Barry ruled the King and was an acknowledged power in affairs of state. Her reign ended only with the death of the King. During her five years of power, she squandered millions of francs and that too at a time when the purchasing capacity of the franc was far greater than it is to-day.

Up to the moment of her intimacy with

the King, she had been a milliner's girl, and later, for a brief period, the frequenter of a well-known gaming house in Paris, and it is not likely that she had ever spent as much as ten thousand francs in a single year of her early life. Now, no sooner was she firmly established in the royal favor than she began to surround herself with a retinue appropriate to her state. She had a steward, a first valet de chambre, a high-priced hairdresser, two perfumers, three or four of the best known dressmakers in France, a maitre d'hotel, a butler, a chaplain, a head coachman, a small and gorgeously attired African, and no end of postillions, outriders, runners, footmen, chair-carriers, valets of the wardrobe, waiting maids and no less than fifty ordinary valets. Many of these retainers, who had profited by her loose-handed generosity, were pitiless

CORSET OF THE PERIOD.

witnesses against her in the trial which condemned her to death.

She spent enormous sums in the entertainments which she devised for the King, and which, in many instances, took the form of outdoor *fêtes*. In one of these, all the guests disguised themselves as gardeners, the King himself wearing a white jacket and digging around the rose trees, while Du Barry, with her hair decked with natural flowers, looked on in laughing approval. At other times she sought to amuse her lover and the court with performances given by comedians, singers, and dancers, the very cream of the Paris theatres; and it is a matter of record that once, after a beautiful ballet, the King rewarded the famous dancer, La Guimard, with a life pension of several hundred dollars.

It was a life of this sort that Mr. Belasco undertook to place upon the stage in such a manner that it would be possible for his auditors to imagine that they saw before them the real Jeanette Du Barry and the real King of France, set-

ting the pace of reckless living, extravagance, and corruption that eventually brought upon their unhappy country, the terrors of the Revolution.

HURDY-GURDY PLAYER.

The first New York performance was announced for Wednesday evening, December 25th; for,—although the play by that time had had eight weeks of rehearsal, which is double the length of time usually given productions of this sort, and two weeks of public performances in Washington and Baltimore,—it was considered necessary to sacrifice two nights to scenic-rehearsals, thus throwing the first performance on Christmas night, which, in the better grades of society in New

York, is generally kept as a domestic holiday and devoted to family dinners, etc. Nevertheless, so vivid was the recollection of Mrs. Carter's exciting *première* in "Zaza," two years before, and so great the interest in her new personation, that the seats for this performance were bought up almost as soon as they were offered, and the curtain rose in the presence of an audience of extraordinary distinction, even for a fashionable Broadway house, and one that filled the theatre to its uttermost capacity.

It is safe to say that no one who was present on that memorable night, will ever forget the moment when the audience that had doubted and questioned at eight o'clock, only to lose itself in the absorbing interest of the drama that was unfolded to them, rose at last with shouts of enthusiasm and waving of handkerchiefs, while tears streamed from women's eyes, and bouquets, torn from breasts that throbbed with emotion, fell at the feet of the great artist who had again conquered cold, critical, sneering New York. There

SEDAN CHAIR.

is one picture, too, which will long remain in the memory. It is that of the actress herself, at the moment when the curtain, falling on the fourth act, hid her from view as she stood, her hands before her face, her whole form shaken with sobs, completely unnerved by the storm and passion and suffering of the mimic scene through which she had just passed.

Great as had been the triumph of her first New York performance of "Zaza," two years before, this one was greater still, even as Mr. Belasco's "Du Barry," is a far greater play than "Zaza."

"Zaza" was remarkable, not only as an entertaining picture of contemporaneous life, morals, and manners in France, but also because of Mrs. Carter's extraordinary performance of the title part, in which she ran the whole gamut of human emotion, from light-hearted comedy to the bitterest anguish that a woman can feel. In "Du Barry" she does all this and a great deal more besides, and in "Du Barry" there is a theme deep enough and strong enough, and of suffi-

cient vital interest to keep the drama that is founded on it before the public for many years to come.

For, after all, it is the theme alone which can give to a play that immortal life for which all dramatists are striving, and in Mr. Belasco's "Du Barry" we have a theme almost as great as that which has brought Shakespeare's play of "Julius Cæsar" down to the threshold of the new century with its power to charm, thrill, and interest absolutely unimpaired by its three hun-

ORANGE-WOMAN.

dred years of life. In "Du Barry," the theme is the French Revolution which was, with the exception of the American War of Independence, the most important movement in modern history. No matter how much we may have read and thought about that period in the history of France, when the peasants, oppressed beyond all endurance by the taxes imposed for the support of a luxurious and profligate court, were beginning to cry for bread, and when the King and his followers were making possible the bloody, but reformatory work of the guillotine that came in later years,—no matter what we may have gained from books about this time, Mr. Belasco's play of "Du Barry" makes it seem more real, and gives us a new understanding of the subject.

"After us the deluge," exclaimed Louis XV in a reckless moment of his career of profligacy, and we can understand it better than ever before, when we see the mimic King standing on the terrace at Versailles where a gorgeous *fête* has been prepared in his honor,

while from without come the sound of angry mutterings from the peasants who are paying for it all.

"Am I no longer King of France?" cries the mimic Louis as he bids his guard drive the rabble from the palace gates in order that their cries can no longer disturb him and his mistress in their revels.

But we who look upon the scene, realize now, if we never did before, why it was that not all the power at the King's command could stifle the cries of the oppressed, or drive away from that palace gates the men and women who were destined, within a few short years, to tear down with bloody hands the ancient and corrupt monarchical structure and drag to the block those painted and periwigged heads that we see here crowding about their King.

The spectacle of this pampered favorite of royalty, bolstered up in her luxurious bedchamber surrounded by every sort of luxury and receiving the flatteries of ministers of state, generals, the prelates

SCREEN AND DRESSING-TABLE ACTUALLY OWNED AND USED BY DU BARRY.

of the church and even the ill-fated princess who was afterwards Queen Marie Antoinette, who come to do her reverence, is in itself a theme worthy of the serious consideration of any one who ever thinks at all. The last act of all—the conclusion of the whole matter, to quote from the Psalmist—shows us this woman, who but yesterday basked in the sunshine of royal favor, on her way to the guillotine, her beautiful hair cropped close in deference to the knife, her whole attitude one of abject, awful terror.

It is something never to be forgotten, this last scene, with the red-robed executioner standing beside her, grim and stolid; the black-robed priest holding aloft his crucifix; and the woman herself crouching with blanched face in the cart, while the "cart-swallows" dance about the wheels, and the mob howls pitilessly for her blood.

All this is history. Every scene is stamped with the immistakable and indelible hall mark of truth and accuracy It is history, but not a mere catalogue of

facts and happenings, such as any commonplace hack can dig out of an encyclopædia. It is history indeed, but it is history touched with the magic wand of a poetic imagination.

COPY OF AFFICHE ACTUALLY USED IN THE SHOP OF LABILLE.

Through it all there runs, like a vein of virgin gold in a lead of quartz a love story, pure, womanly, and redeeming, and as sweet and fragrant as the bunch of violets which the dramatist has chosen as its fitting symbol. It is this love story,—which has its beginning in the early part of the play, rises to splendid tragic heights in the great scene

ACT IV.

COMTESSE DU BARRY.

with the King, and abides with her to the very end,—that, more than all else beside, has rendered Jeanette Du Barry a sympathetic character; that has converted the life story of a famous woman into a drama of deep significance and vital, human interest.

It is impossible to do even meagre justice in these few pages to the consummate skill with which Mr. Belasco has constructed what may be termed, in all truth, an ideal historical drama; one which gives a picture of life at the court of Louis XV, which is not only truthful, but intensely interesting as well. It is no easy matter to transplant a woman from the Versailles of the *ancien régime* to the Broadway of to-day; to bring her down through a century and a half of time and present her, in the exact environment that was hers in life, as a living, breathing loving woman, one who has the power to sway an audience of modern New York play-goers, even as her great prototype swayed the court of her royal lover.

Yet this is precisely what David Belasco

has done, and he has done his work so thoroughly well that those who have seen the performance more than once—and there are many of those already—are beginning to realize that the play which holds their attention from the rise to the fall of the curtain, and brings them back to the theatre again and again for a fuller comprehension of its subtleties, is not merely a cunningly contrived vehicle for the display of the actress's versatile art, but a drama which is bound to take a permanent place on the English-speaking stage.

Certainly no play has ever been given in this country with such fidelity to historical truth as this one; and in order to understand the extent to which Mr. Belasco's taste for accuracy in detail has been carried, we have only to glance at a few of the properties, furniture, and costumes used in the different scenes of the play.

In the first act, we have a picture of the shop in which Du Barry began her career as a milliner's girl. This was kept

A Corner of Du Barry's Bedchamber in the Palace at Versailles.

by a Mme. Labille, doing business in the name of her husband, and, according to the most trustworthy accounts, was

SPINNET OF THE PERIOD.

situated in the rue St. Honoré. This scene has been made, as far as was possible, in exact imitation of the shop of one hundred and fifty years ago. The seats and counters are made from models of

those used at that time and the goods displayed are those actually mentioned in the circular sent out by the original Mme. Labille to her customers. The gilt cabinets used for the display of certain articles are old pieces that were actually in use in the middle of the eighteenth century; and the canes, bonnets, and other similar articles are precise reproductions from the fashions of that day.

In the course of this act, a sedan chair stops outside the door of the shop in such a way that it can be seen by the audience. This chair is different from others in that its top opens so as to allow for the elaborate coiffures of Louis XV's reign. It is an exact copy of one that belonged to the Polish princess, Marie Leczinska, wife of Louis XV, and is worthy of a place in any collection, as a model of the sedan chair of its period.

The best example of studied detail in this act, however, is found in the character of Vaubernier, the father of Du Barry, who enters with the cry; "J'ai pierre noire pour noircire pantoufles et souliers,"

VERITABLE NIGHT TABLE ACTUALLY USED BY DU BARRY AT VERSAILLES.

signifying, "I have blackstone with which to blacken slippers and shoes." Blackstone was black lead mixed with oil, which gave to the shoes the dead black color which is as characteristic of the period as the dead finish of the Louis XV gilding shown in the furniture. An excellent example of the basket that this blackstone was carried in, with the quaint little pots and the swab sold with it go to complete Vaubernier's make-up. This detail alone, when compared with the costumes of the little boot-cleaners, who appear in the last act, plainly shows the difference in time between the beginning and the end of the play.

The most striking characteristic of Act II, to one who observes with the eye of an artist, is the fact that the color scheme is one of a peculiar shade of red. More than one person experienced in such matters has wondered at the daring of the manager in giving such a setting to a woman with such extraordinary red hair as that of Mrs. Carter. Others have commented on the fact that the red is

not like other shades of the same color, and a few men and women of fine artistic perceptions, have noticed that under a high light the actress's hair blends in exquisite harmony with the red of the walls and curtains. Those whose interest has been excited by this scene may be glad to know that this peculiar shade of red was made specially for this production, in France, after every upholstery store in New York had been ransacked for it in vain. The walls, curtains, and upholstery are all done in a rich brocade of this color, and of this no less than one hundred and seventeen yards is used. The spinnet in this scene is an exact copy of one used at the time.

It was during Louis XV's time that the Chinese pavilion had its existence in Paris, and, to a certain extent, influenced current taste in household decorations. A suggestion of this is seen in certain vases and ornaments used in this scene. The gilt clock on the wall is, of course, French, and was carefully made from one of that period. The gilding on the

furniture is not bright and glittering, but has the dead finish characteristic of the time.

Some observers have noticed that in the third act Mrs. Carter wears but one shoe buckle. That is because she has

THE DU BARRY COFFEE CUP.

found it impossible to procure a suitable mate for the one which she does wear, and which is fashioned of silver set with diamonds and rubies and surmounted with a royal crown. It was formerly the property of Mme. Du Barry, and was actually worn by her on just such occasions as the one which constitutes this

act. The cup and saucer used by Mrs. Carter in this scene are of solid gold, and were also the property of the famous Frenchwoman, as was the table that stands beside the bed.

Connoisseurs in Louis XV furniture have had their attention attracted by the table which stands at the foot of the bed and which has not its counterpart in this country. It was actually made and used during the reign of Louis XV and has a top of solid onyx of great beauty and rarity.

But the crowning achievement in the setting of this act is the bed itself, which is in every detail an exact copy of the one in which the real Du Barry sat when she held her famous levee in her apartment in Versailles. It is hung with curtains of a peculiar green color which Madame Du Barry is known to have affected, and which are fashioned from stuff woven and dyed in Lyons especially for this production. Above the bed are three dozen superb ostrich plumes nearly five feet in length. The linen sheets and pillow cases were

ACT V.

COMTESSE DU BARRY.

all made from designs taken from originals in the Musée de Cluny, and the monogram and crown which adorn them are of gold and jewels. The red bedspread is

VERITABLE LOUIS XV TABLE.

trimmed with magnificent Russian sable and veritable Louis XV gold lace. The white spread and the pillow cases which match it, used at the *petit lêver* are of white

velvet, edged all the way round with spendid gold lace. These articles are all adorned with the insignia of royalty in gold and precious stones. In the palace of Versailles, Mme Du Barry's bed stood in an alcove; but in the drama, for obvious dramatic reasons, it has been placed in the chamber itself. The hand-glass, patch-box, powderbox, and the boxes for jewelled butterflies, rings, brooches, etc., are all veritable relics of the period and are exquisite specimens of workmanship. Among these ornaments is one called a grèluchon, which is a pin for the hair, ornamented with a large round knob of diamonds. This pin, which may be termed the prototype of the modern jewelled hairpin, was an invention of Madame Du Barry and in the eyes of the polite world it had a special significance of its own. It was worn by a woman of fashion only in honor of the sweetheart whom she loved best.

Seldom, if ever, has such a splendid picture of court life been placed upon the stage as Mr. Belasco has given us in

A Corner of the Property Room.

the scene of the royal *fête* in the fourth act. There is not a detail that has not been carefully thought out and accurately presented. The uniforms are all correct, even to those of the Scotch mercenaries, with halberds, who were employed at that time as a bodyguard to the King, who, knowing the revolutionary spirit that was abroad, dared not trust Frenchmen to defend the royal person. The curtains of royal purple used in this scene are of velvet and were made in Lyons especially for this

BODY GUARD OF THE KING.

production. The punch bowl is an exact copy of the one from which Du Barry was wont to dispense refreshment to the guests at her royal *fêtes*.

It is in the last act, however, that the student of the manners and customs of the latter part of the eighteenth century will find the greatest variety of interest. The first thing that challenges our attention here is the radical change in dress, which tells plainly that a new order of things has come into the world. The elaborate hoops, flounces, perukes, laces, and small clothes of a dissolute and luxrious period have disappeared, and in their place we see our own modern dress in its rudimentary form. A score or more of characteristic street types are introduced in this scene, and among them one which attracted so much attention on the first night that it is shown now only in a modified form. That one is the "Marchand de Coco," or seller of licorice water, a type which is still to be seen in the streets of Paris. This one still comes on the stage, but the apparatus which he carried

on his back, and which attracted undue attention to himself, has been relegated to the property-room. In this scene one

The Punch Bowl.

may see also the water-carriers, who numbered fully twenty thousand at this time, and who furnished Parisian houses with their entire water supply; orange-women,

a flower girl, a cobbler, a hurdy-gurdy player, a street-porter, an Auvergnat tinker, and a little boot-cleaner, whose outfit is very different from that carried by Vaubernier in the first act.

All these characters are carefully reproduced from drawings of the period by Bouchardon.

The tumbrel in which Du Barry rides to execution, the harness and color of the horse, the *tricoteuses*, the "cart-swallows" who dance about her, and also the *sans-culottes*, federals, and national guardsmen are all correctly portrayed here.

Many of the guns used in the last act are veritable weapons of the period, while others are exact copies. The little hair trunk used in the prison scene, and which is not unlike those that are found here and there in old-fashioned New England garrets, is also a genuine article of the period.

History tells us that her little trunk was almost the only bit of luxury that Madame Du Barry took with her to prison. It was made of cow-skin and ornamented with solid gold nails and bands. The

most interesting article seen in this act, however, is the hurdy-gurdy carried by one of the mob and probably not noticed by one person in ten. This instrument was obtained by an Italian padrone, who thought it likely that one might be found in New York, and who, for six weeks, went about through the Italian quarter and in and out of the homes of organ-grinders in search of it. He found it at last in the home of an Italian, who valued it highly as an heir-loom that had been in his family for nearly a century and a half, and who was, with great difficulty, induced to part with it. It is doubtful if its counterpart can be found in this country, and Mr. Belasco has already been offered a great deal more than he paid for it, by collectors who desire to add it to their treasures.

ZAMORE.

To crown all, in his effort to reproduce the precise atmosphere of a dead and gone period, Mr. Belasco has discarded gas and electricity and returned to candles as a means of lighting the stage and investing his scenes with the soft radiance peculiar to candlelight, which modern science has been unable to imitate.

But interesting as "Du Barry" is in theme and treatment, splendid and tasteful and accurate as the production is in point of scenery, costumes and accessories, all the time, thought and money that have been expended on the drama would avail but little were it not for the genius of the actress who is the central figure of it all. For, deeper than its historical interest, more significant than the shadow of coming disaster that overhangs every scene, is the pitiful story of a woman's heart—torn by suffering and purified by a great and enduring love—that dominates the entire play.

Mrs. Carter's performance of the part of Jeanette Du Barry is one that deserves to live in dramatic history as one of the

great masterpieces of the mimetic art. In technique, in the wide range of emotion revealed, in the heights of dramatic interest attained and held, it is an effort that will well repay the closest study on the part of the earnest dramatic student.

But at the core of it all—underneath the modest garb of the milliner's girl, the gorgeous robes of the pampered favorite of the Bourbon King, and the coarse gown of the condemned prisoner—is the soul of the woman who has created the part.

Du Barry Slippers.